

LOVE MEETINGS. CINEMA AND THE ISSUE OF SEX IN ITALY (1948-1978)

Final conference of the PRIN 2015 project

University of Milan, 27-28 November 2019
via Festa del Perdono 7, Milan

Academic Direction: Francesco Di Chiara, Valentina Re, Tomaso Subini, Federico Vitella

Organization: Dalila Missero (dalila.missero@unimi.it)

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Pietro Adamo (Università degli Studi di Torino)
Daniel Biltereyst (Ghent University)
Peppino Ortoleva (Università degli Studi di Torino)
Anna Tonelli (Università di Urbino Carlo Bo)

CALL FOR PAPERS

In the period between 1948 (and the first elections of the new Republic, that put the DC in charge of the country) and 1978 (when the first erotic cinemas emerged in Italy), Italian cinema was characterized by increasingly sexualized representations. This timeframe saw a high level of conflict in public discourses on the “question of sex”, intended broadly, which brought into question issues like intimacy, affective relationships, the construction of gender roles and identities. All of these processes merged in that overall “transformation of intimacy” that sociologist Anthony Giddens identified: the public emergence of the private meant that spaces once regulated at a personal and individual level became socially pertinent, and the object of collective negotiations. In parallel, there was a radical change in habits (synthesized in the legal concept of “buon costume”, public morality), with a progressive weakening of a so-called sense of decency.

In 1969, Callisto Cosulich had already recognized this phenomenon, describing it with the metaphor of the “Italian cinema’s ascent to sex”: an ascent that corresponded concretely to the diffusion of a sexualized imaginary, that was predominantly embodied in the eroticization of the female body. In the very years of Cosulich’s volume, the sexualization of cinema had started to overlap with the first appearances of mass-produced pornography, in print, for adults. Within just a few years, cinematic porn was to break free of its isolation, via two semi-institutional channels that paralleled the mainstream: private televisions and adult film theatres. The end of the 1970s appeared to signal the end of this phenomenon, described by Ortoleva as the definitive “decline of obscenity taboos”.

The conference aims to stimulate discussion between the disciplines of film and historical studies, on the main themes of the PRIN 2015 research project *Comizi d’amore*, and in particular on four general questions:

- the role played by cinema in the progressive sexualization of the media system (and in particular the popular press, which the project has already mapped out extensively, as available on its database);
- the role of cinema within a series of key historical junctions for the project’s theme (the clericalization of institutions during the Centrist years, the Merlin Law, the creation of the centre-

left, youth movements, the feminist movement, gay liberation, the sexual revolution, debates on divorce and abortion, reforms of family rights);

- the connection between the sexualization of cinema and the emergence of pornography;
- the specificities of the Italian case.

Interested colleagues who are considering a paper are invited to consult the project's database (<https://sites.unimi.it/comizidamore/>), which contains c. 15,000 indexed documents tagged with keywords to enable specialized research. Scholars who do not yet have access to the database can request this from the conference organizer (dalila.missero@unimi.it).

Paper proposals (max 300 words) and a brief bio should be sent to princomizidamore@gmail.com by 30 June 2019. They will be evaluated by the conference's academic directors and the scientific committee.

The conference accepts papers in Italian and in English.

The conference will not have a registration fee, and we are able to provide 10 bursaries to cover travel and accommodation for certain speakers, with priority given to non-permanent scholars. To request a bursary, send a justification of the need for support to the organizer (dalila.missero@unimi.it).

Proposals can be submitted that speak to the following possible (but not exclusive) areas:

Section A (film and cultural history)

- the relationship between the history of cinema and specific historical events
- reflections on the periodization of the phenomenon
- the role of cinema in the history of emotions and intimacy
- the role of cinema in the broader processes of the decline of obscenity taboos

Section B (institutions)

- the workings of administrative censorship
- cultural debates on administrative censorship
- public funding
- the role of the courts (histories of sequestering or obscenity trials)
- parliamentary debates on censorship, public morality and pornography
- judiciary debates on public morality and pornography
- the role of sexualization as a production and distribution strategy, as a response to the crisis of cinema
- billboards (as a promotional strategy or a counter-measure)
- the segmentation and formation of audiences of erotic cinema, and the birth of the specialized circuit
- critical reception
- actions triggered by public opinion (associationism) and individual dissent (e.g. through readers' letters)
- gender inequality in the production system
- film technologies (amateur cinema, formats, film industry professionals)
- theatres (second-/third-run, provincial cinemas, specialist circuits)

Section C (auteurs, popular forms, constructions of identity, formations of tastes)

- film and directors that represented the most relevant moments of the sexualization of cinema
- genre cinema and popular forms
- serialization models for erotic cinema and sexy comedies

- dynamics of plagiarism, vernacularization or imitation, between auteur practices and popular genres
- stardom and sexuality
- fandom and the popular reception of stardom
- performance and acting
- models of masculinity and femininity in Italian cinema
- the representation of homosexuality
- the construction of the voyeurist spectator
- intermediality (literature, photography, theatre, radio and television)
- the popular press: women's illustrated news, illustrated stories of films, erotic periodicals for men, the discursive strategies behind sexuality and genre roles in the cinema
- the representation and social discourses of the body
- aging and sexuality: discourses and forms of representation
- narrative and representation models
- stereotypes and gender inequalities in representations and social discourses

Section D (the connection between the sexualization of cinema and the emergence of pornography)

- the concept of pornography
- pornography and the artistic avant-garde
- pornography and counter-culture
- debates on pornography from aesthetic, cultural, juridical and/or moral perspectives
- the role of the press in the diffusion of pornography (and in particular film pornography)
- the role of private television networks in the diffusion of pornography
- the social role of adult cinemas